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TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE STORYTELLING (TPRS):
A PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND
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By

Alexander Honorat Rapstine

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ABSTRACT

TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE STORYTELLING (TPRS): A PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND EVALUATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

By

Alexander Honorat Rapstine

Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) is a Foreign Language Teaching method that has recently become popular in high schools and some universities in the United States. There are a number of practical descriptions of TPRS, and its proponents are using the internet to popularize it. Yet despite its popularity and claims of success, there has been little research to determine the theoretical legitimacy of TPRS. To explore this issue, I begin with a practical description of TPRS, continue by examining its suggested theoretical underpinnings in a critical light, and then propose and examine additional theoretical areas of importance. I end by evaluating my findings within the framework of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century, discussing the potential benefits and drawbacks of TPRS. The theoretical research presented here is intended to suggest future areas of research and a more academic approach to the examination of TPRS.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) is currently one of the most popular methods being used in foreign language classes across the United States. It is popular both in high schools and universities and is used with a number of foreign languages, including the three primary high school languages (Spanish, French, German). An informal search on the internet, using the Google search engine, reveals that a number of high schools now consider it an important part of their curricula. Additionally, it is now being used at some universities, such as University of the South.

The man responsible for popularizing TPRS and for promoting it through workshops is Blaine Ray. These TPRS workshops attract large numbers of participants in every region of the United States. A cursory glance at Blaine Ray's website (www.blaineraytprs.com) shows no less than 50 workshops in the summer and fall/winter seasons of 2003 in cities across the US. The materials provided for this technique are readily available through several Internet sites. TPRS is being heralded by many in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) as a solution to declining enrollments in Foreign Language classes (see Marsh, 1997, Ray and Neilson, 2000, Ray and Seely, 2002, Davidheiser, 2002, Williams, 2002), although Ray and Seely do caution that it should not be viewed as a cure-all (2002: xvii). Teachers have reported large jumps in class enrollments (see Davidheiser, 2002) as well, although actual data supporting this are hard to find. Despite the popularity of TPRS, research supporting it is virtually non-existent. Teachers appear to be adopting TPRS as the method of choice merely by word-of-mouth, with little empirical evidence to back their decisions. This seemingly blind acceptance of TPRS points to an obvious problem: its claims may not be backed up with data.

Thus, there appears to be a bandwagon effect involved in teachers' willingness to use TPRS, similar to what happened in the 1960s with the Audiolingual Method (ALM) (Omaggio Hadley, 2001: 112). After harsh reactions from academia in the late 1960s and early 1970s, ALM ceased to be relevant, and alternatives were explored (Omaggio Hadley, 2001: 113). While it is far too premature to imply that TPRS might follow the same path as ALM, it is surprising and disturbing to find that nearly 15 years after its appearance, no theoretical foundation of the method has been published. Ray and Seely report that Ronald Sheen of the University of Quebec at Trois Rivieres is attempting to begin a research project with TPRS, but there are currently no signs that this project is underway (2002: xiv). Additionally, James Asher has proposed some parameters of TPRS to be researched (Ray and Seely, 2002: 237-238); unfortunately, Asher's suggestions do not concern uncovering the theoretical foundations of TPRS, but instead center directly on parameters of storytelling, as if TPRS had already been solidly researched and shown to be theoretically sound. His suggestions are certainly worthwhile, but seem premature in light of the absence of research. Before exploring these individual areas of TPRS, it is necessary to establish a theoretical basis. By examining TPRS in general as a method, specifically within the field of German FLT, and then by evaluating it within the framework of the National Standards, I hope to provide the initial research needed to allow others to explore the more specific areas of investigation within TPRS.

Chapter 1

TPRS

Description, Classroom Environment, and Assessment

TPRS is a phenomenon that has been promoted by foreign language teachers from several languages. In the realm of German FLT, three important figures in TPRS are Rob Williams, Mike Miller, and James Davidheiser. Rob Williams, a high school German teacher in Virginia, holds several workshops on TPRS. Mike Miller, a junior high school teacher in Colorado Springs, Colorado, is well known within TPRS German because of his development of TPRS materials for German FLT. These materials are offered on the Internet at http://www.sabineundmichael.com and, along with Blaine Ray's materials (translated into German), are the only German TPRS materials available. James Davidheiser, a professor of German at the University of the South, differs from many TPRS proponents because he has written about TPRS within a university setting. Blaine Ray (discussed in more detail below) is the most recognized name in TPRS, and although his original materials were intended for Spanish FLT, they have been translated into other languages, including French and German. Carol Gaab is an important figure in TPRS materials because of her site (http://www.tprstorytelling.com), the home of TPRS Publishing, Inc., and also because she has authored some TPRS materials. Throughout the discussion of TPRS, these names will play a vital role in its description and the identification of its assumptions, claims, and theoretical underpinnings.

Ray, a Spanish language teacher from Bakersfield, California, was frustrated with the ineffectiveness of Total Physical Response (TPR) after its first few months of use.

By combining his technique of Storytelling with TPR in 1990, he was able to create a technique that he and several others now offer to teachers across the country through several workshops.

Although teachers have adapted TPRS in various ways to fit the classroom, the following sequence falls within its standard practice within a high school. Some of the variations noted in this discussion are primarily mentioned by Davidheiser (2001, 2002) in his description of TPRS in a university setting. According to Ray and Seely (2002), Davidheiser (2001, 2002), Williams (2002), and Gaab (2003), TPRS consists of two phases. Phase 1 of TPRS is often referred to as the TPR Phase. Phase 2 is referred to as the Storytelling Phase. The TPR Phase (sometimes referred to as the silent phase) uses Total Physical Response commands to provide the vocabulary base for the second phase, the Storytelling Phase.

Phase 1: The TPR Phase

TPR was developed by James J. Asher in the late 1950s and early 1960s (see Asher, 1969), and was used extensively by followers of the Natural Approach. It follows the idea that adult second language learners have essentially the same abilities as children learning their first language. Because children do not "learn" the grammatical rules of their first language, but instead "acquire" the language naturally, it is thought that adults will learn the language more effectively if they are exposed to it in a natural manner, i.e. if they acquire the second language as children do.

According to Lovik (1996), there are four essential components of TPR. First, there is a strong concentration on listening comprehension before language production.

This "silent period" is considered to mimic children's initial exposure to language, when they do not produce language, but only hear it. Secondly, linguistic forms are connected with actions (thus the word "Physical" in Total Physical Response), creating associations between words or phrases and physical actions, gestures, or motions. Commands become extremely important in a TPR classroom because they form a logical connection between the form (the command) and its meaning (the action or gesture). Thirdly, learners under TPR should never be forced to speak. Speaking should only develop in a natural manner. Finally, the students must be supplied with constant Comprehensible Input (CI), Stephen Krashen's concept of only giving students language input that they will be able to understand in their current language level. Concrete examples, short sentences, and above all the gestures and actions serve as the primary means of supplying this input to the students.

In a TPR classroom, the teacher gives commands in the target language, and physically models these commands as they are being said. Students are expected to just imitate the teacher, not to actually repeat the utterances. Gaab (2003) mentions three types of commands that can be used in TPR: Novel Commands, Play Commands, and Chain Commands. A Novel Command consists of new words or new combinations of words and is defined by Ray and Seely as a "command which students have in general never heard before and which contains elements they are already quite familiar with or can easily comprehend (such as cognates)" (2002: 228). Play Commands are generally comical in nature, and have two goals: to practice vocabulary and to liven up a class that might be moving too slowly. An example might be using the concept of eating with nonsensical commands, such as, "Eat your arm." Play Commands are oftentimes

humorous, and because the students must understand this humor, they can be used to check comprehension as well (i.e., if a student laughs, they have understood the command). A Chain Command consists of multiple new vocabulary items, usually two to three. Gaab explains:

> [. . .] if *(s)he is hungry, (s)he eats, the wolf* are the new vocabulary items, these three items would be randomly combined into groups of two to three. For example, *he is hungry, he eats; he eats, he is hungry; he is hungry, he eats, the wolf; the wolf, he eats, he is hungry; the wolf, he is hungry, he eats.* (2003: v)

These combinations are thought to provide more powerful visual imagery, because students have to visualize each individual section of the Chain Command. Chain Commands do not seem to be very communicative, though, as students are listening to different combinations of the same elements, similar to a drill. It is unclear whether these commands truly provide more powerful visual imagery, and this question is open to future research.

After modeling commands for a period of time, students are able to complete the commands without the teacher's modeling, instead using the association with the command to act it out. Once this has been established, other vocabulary can be introduced. Davidheiser states that students should start giving their own commands in the third week of instruction, noting:

> During Asher's first classroom study of TPR, when he still believed that students should be silent for one whole class, he faced a mutiny by students who had learned the words and wanted to speak them. Thus developed his recommendation that we allow students to speak when they feel the need, a more natural approach, which works well in my German classes. (2002: 27)

Thus, Davidheiser's recommendation appears to suggest that students who have reached the point of wanting to speak should be allowed to do so when they are ready. It is not clear, however, how a student determines when they are ready to speak, or whether previous experience in a language class or with the target language (TL) may prompt a student to believe they are ready to speak. Williams (2002) suggests that the Storytelling Phase should serve as the de facto starting place for production on the part of the students. As new vocabulary is introduced, previous vocabulary can be recycled, expanding the students' base, but also practicing and reinforcing what they have already learned.

Moving from TPR to Storytelling

The vocabulary that is established during the first phase is extremely important to the later stages of TPRS, because the stories used in the classroom will draw on this initial vocabulary base. Practitioners of TPRS vary in the amount of time spent in this first phase, but the average amount of time appears to be around three weeks, sometimes with the final third week being reserved for students to begin producing speech. Once this period comes to its close, a transition is made to the second phase, the Storytelling Phase.

Phase 2: The Storytelling Phase

The Storytelling Phase consists of three story types: the Personalized Mini-Situation (PMS), the mini-story, and the main story, and can be seen in more detail in Figure 1. The central feature of this phase is the **PMS** (Ray and Seely, 2002, Williams,
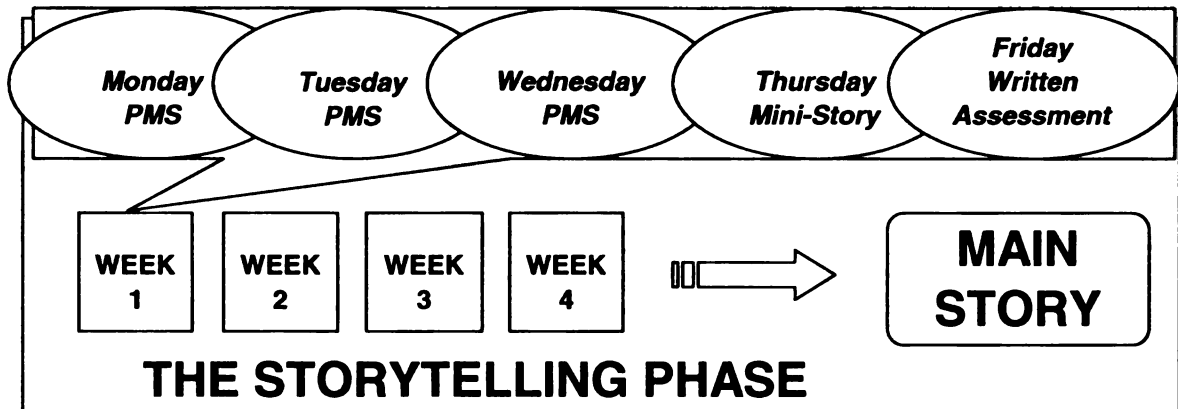
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Figure 1   The Storytelling Phase

2002, Gaab, 2003). A PMS is defined as a "brief story (nearly always shorter than a

mini-story) used as a vehicle for acquiring vocabulary and structure through

comprehensible aural input and for providing an efficient and interesting way to begin

expressive use of new vocabulary, morphology and structure" (Ray and Seely, 2002:

229). In the Storytelling Phase, a new PMS is introduced daily, focusing on three to four

new vocabulary words or phrases. This PMS can be a traditional story, or can use

pictures to tell the story, in which case it is broken down into what Davidheiser refers to

as "frames" (2002: 28). In Davidheiser's use of TPRS, each frame corresponds to one

picture and one-eighth of the PMS. While the teacher tells students the PMS, previous

vocabulary is recycled and practiced as well, and the TPR aspect is retained in the telling

of the mini-situation using gestures. Students must then act out the PMS with gestures

and motions, retelling the story they have heard. Though proponents of TPRS do not

term it as such, this retelling serves as a sort of "Practice Phase." The teacher has the

additional option of changing the perspective from which the PMS is being told, and then

having students retell the story from this new perspective.

These daily PMSs culminate in a weekly **mini-story**, and where the PMS is

composed of "frame" pictures, these "frames" connect to the subsequent PMSs, which

will eventually constitute the entire mini-story. A mini-story is defined as a

> [. . .] brief story (though nearly always longer than a
> personalized mini-situation) used as a vehicle for acquiring
> vocabulary and structure through comprehensible aural
> input and for providing an efficient and interesting way to
> begin expressive use of new vocabulary, morphology and
> structure. (Ray and Seely, 2002: 228)

Mini-stories function on a slightly larger scale than PMSs, and incorporate the

vocabulary from that week's four PMSs. In the context of the mini-story, cultural

information is much more prominent, and the use of picture aids is increased.

Vocabulary from the previous four PMSs and any vocabulary previously learned is

recycled, and there are no new words introduced (Ray and Seely, 2002: 56). Gaab

suggests that students engage in a "Partner Practice" after the teacher has repeated the

mini-story several times. In her suggestion to potential TPRS adopters she writes:

> Once students have heard the story numerous times, initiate
> a Partner Practice. At this stage, the purpose of Partner
> Practice is to encourage students to practice telling the
> mini-story in a low-stress environment. Encourage student-
> partners to help one another and observe as they tell the
> story. Walk around the room, eavesdrop on their retells
> and be available to model vocabulary items, phrases and
> grammatical structures. (2003: vi)

Here, the teacher allows the class to be learner-centered, but remains available to monitor

the students' retells.

These daily PMSs and weekly mini-stories build to the **main story** (often called

the main chapter story), which varies from 15 to more than a hundred sentences (Ray and

Seely, 2002: 42). This larger text contains all the vocabulary from the previous PMSs

and mini-stories, no new vocabulary words, and because it is a larger text, the students usually don't act out or retell the story. Here teachers have the opportunity to use the main story as a large reading text. Because the students are familiar with the vocabulary from the PMSs and mini-stories, this text presents minimal problems in terms of word recognition. The main story can also be used to test reading ability.

Story Content

According to Williams (2002), the content of stories being told is quite open-ended, but they should have the following characteristics. To begin with, the stories should be bizarre, exaggerated, and personalized towards the students (**BEP**). Ray and Seely explain that stories become more bizarre by adding the unexpected. Additionally, they explain that time, numbers, and objects can be exaggerated (2002: 68). Secondly, the teacher should always make the students look good when personalizing the story. Finally, there should always be a problem for one or all of the characters.

These are not authentic texts in the TL, because they have been created by FL teachers who are quite often non-native speakers. Although Ray, Miller, and others have developed materials that many programs using TPRS are utilizing, several TPRS teachers have simply created their own.

Use of English within Classroom

Ray and Seely state frequently that translation checks in the students' first language (generally English in the US) are required to insure comprehension:

> I say the item in the target language and have the class or
> the student give me a quick oral translation in their first

> language. For example, if I'm teaching Spanish to English-
> speaking students, I say "camina" and the response is
> "walk." This is the most reliable way to check
> comprehension. If you never do this, you never know
> whether some students might be assuming that *camina*
> means go instead of walk, for example. (2002: 27)

Ray and Seely are also well aware of how this use of translation has been criticized

(2002: 211) but maintain that it is vital for comprehension within TPRS. Although

further research will be required to determine the validity of these statements, Ray and

Seely mention other proponents' alternative forms of checking comprehension, including

Melinda Forward and Shirley Ogle's use of drawing by the students to determine whether

or not they have understood what they have heard (2002: 39). The use of English is

discussed again below in the context of assessment.

Teaching Techniques and Guidelines

According to Williams, there are several guidelines that must be followed to use

TPRS effectively. First, for every new vocabulary item that is introduced, a TPR gesture

must be associated with that word. These gestures need to be practiced extensively.

Next, these new vocabulary words must be personalized with the students through

questions and answers (the Personalized Question-Answer, or PQA). A **PQA** is defined

as a "brief session in which the teacher asks the students questions about themselves and

in which specific new target vocabulary is used in most questions to provide

comprehensible input in a real context" (Ray and Seely, 2002: 229). PQAs will

oftentimes employ an *either/or* format, where students are given two options to choose

from (e.g. *Who calls you? Your mother or [movie star]?*). Previous vocabulary,

cognates, and varying contexts can help students to answer these questions. This leads to

the PMS, where class participation should be at a high level. Teachers should retell the PMS multiple times until the students know the story extremely well. Once this has been accomplished, students should be able to retell parts of the story, and eventually the entire story. To incorporate grammatical practice into the storytelling, the teacher should tell the story using different perspectives (pronouns) and tenses. For example, a story told in the first-person singular perspective might be retold in the third-person singular to practice the use of different pronouns and the related verb conjugations. An example of changing tense might be moving a story told in the present tense into a past tense. Finally, students should retell the story using these new perspectives and tenses. The use of different pronouns can be implemented in all stages of instruction, whereas the use of different tenses should be reserved for higher levels (2002: 5-8).[1]

The Role of Grammar

Ray and Seely (2002) believe that grammatical accuracy is important, but that explicit grammar teaching should be delayed until students are "fluent." What Ray and Seely mean by "fluency" is "acquisition" within a learning-acquisition distinction (see Chapter 2 for more on the learning-acquisition distinction). During the TPR Phase, there is little or no grammar instruction, and in the Storytelling Phase, there is only explicit instruction for more advanced students. Ray and Seely state that students of TPRS develop grammatical accuracy in five ways: 1) They are given comprehensible input so that they remain interested. 2) They use targeted vocabulary words that focus on meaning and contain grammatical features that students use when retelling stories.

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[1]For a slightly varied version of these steps, see Ray and Seely (2002: 70-85).

12

3) Students tell stories from different perspectives. 4) Students at higher levels of TPRS instruction are taught grammar through what Ray and Seely refer to as "learning activities," as opposed to acquisition activities. 5) Students learn songs and chants with grammatical features (2002: 123). They maintain that students who have already become "fluent" in a language and have "demonstrated an ability to both learn the grammar rules and apply them as [they are] speaking by monitoring [their] speech and editing it when necessary" (2002: 124) should be taught grammar in order to achieve grammatical accuracy. Regarding grammar, Ray and Neilson state the following:

> In the second and third years, TPR-Storytelling integrates more advanced grammar (but this is done without drill and grammar exercises). Although students do not know the rules for what they can speak and write, they do assimilate a lot of grammar in the first year. In the second year, these rules are discussed and practiced so students can edit and perfect their written and oral production. (2000: iv)

They further state that students should receive more formal grammar instruction as their language abilities improve. Grammar instruction is discussed in more detail under the heading "Acquisition-Learning Distinction and Imbedded Grammar" below.

Deviations

Davidheiser (2002) differs in the way that grammar is handled within the TPR Phase. Vocabulary lists, grammar structures, and pronunciation practice are activities that he suggests some teachers may add to their lesson plans, albeit usually in small amounts. Davidheiser uses grammar instruction during the Storytelling Phase, but has tried to find a middle ground between explicit instruction and imbedded grammar instruction. Handouts and worksheets are given to the students for practice. All of the

grammar points must be relative to the current PMS, and because grammatical terms are often very similar to their English counterparts, he believes that they can be mentioned quickly without breaking the flow of TPRS instruction.

Homework

According to Williams (2002), homework is typically assigned every night of instruction, and pertains directly to what was presented in class on that day. Students are expected to review the new vocabulary every night. Additional assignments might include the following: composing creative (for lower level students) and longer form (for upper level students) writing assignments, where a specific time limit and/or number of words serve as the criteria, creating a story with pictures to tell the other students sitting in the student's row, and creating a collection of pictures (a picture dictionary). Additionally, students are expected to practice telling stories to parents or other family members.

Assessment

There are various ways to assess students in a TPRS classroom. In addition to the use of the main stories to test reading ability, vocabulary pop quizzes can be given. Timed "free writing" can be used, where students are expected to write a specific amount of words within a set time limit. Students can also be asked to write or retell portions of the story within a certain amount of time.

Ray and Seely stress that tests should be unannounced in order to assess long-term retention of vocabulary. "Since we are teaching for mastery, we need to have a way

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to see if our students are learning on a long-term basis. We must assess with unannounced tests. That is the only way to see if our students know the material without studying" (2002: 95). They test only vocabulary and require students to translate TL words into English, claiming that an "understanding of target language vocabulary correlates closely with acquisition of the language" (2002: 96). Similar to the previous discussion on the use of English within the classroom, it is unknown whether these statements, given without citation, have any validity. Further research in this area and into the effectiveness of this form of assessment is required.

Integration into Curriculum

TPRS is now being integrated into the curricula of several high schools, which has brought about the development of a number of materials. Additionally, the Internet has become the primary venue for the distribution of these materials, and for the promotion of TPRS. Proponents of TPRS, such as Ray, appear to be playing an important role in this process, as schools choose TPRS despite the lack of literature available concerning its theoretical legitimacy and/or success. This seems to point further to the bandwagon effect involved in the schools' acceptance of TPRS into their curricula.

Materials

The German foreign language books, Deutsch Aktuell and Komm Mit!, both have supplemental TPRS handbooks. Other foreign language instruction books have developed TPRS supplements as well, including Gaab's TPR Storytelling Book from

¡Ven Conmigo!: Holt Spanish Level One. The tendency appears to be that foreign

language book publishers are producing these supplemental TPRS materials instead of

creating purely TPRS textbooks. Both Davidheiser (2002) and Ray and Seely (2002)

claim that TPRS can be used with any textbook that a teacher may be required to use; a

teacher does not necessarily need a TPRS textbook. However, the number of TPRS

materials available is slowly growing. The most recognizable of these is Ray's Look, I

Can Talk! series, available for first through third year instruction for German, French,

Spanish, and English, with an additional fourth year book for Spanish, as well as

additional materials (overheads, videos, and instructors' materials). Mike Miller offers

the Sabine und Michael Workbook for German, with additional materials (tests, quizzes,

projects, and overhead masters). Additional materials are available for Spanish, French,

and ESL from TPRS Publishing, Inc. (discussed in more depth below).

The Internet

As stated earlier, it is difficult to find theoretical work and research concerning

TPRS. Even the materials available, though seemingly abundant, garner little attention in

book reviews in the language journals. Thus, it is not surprising how many TPRS

descriptions and materials are on the Internet. Two primary sources of TPRS information

are Blaine Ray's website, http://www.blaineraytprs.com/, and

http://www.tprstorytelling.com/, the home of TPRS Publishing, Inc. Both sites list

information on TPRS workshops, sell TPRS materials, offer up additional TPRS links,

and attempt to provide testimonial and theoretical support for the success of TPRS.

Another source is the moretprs listserve (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/moretprs/),

which allows users of TPRS to discuss the method among themselves and with Ray. Although some sections of the websites are very informative, including the Frequently Asked Questions section at TPRS Publishing, Inc., there is much to be desired in terms of linear, researched arguments. Claims are made quite often about the success and theoretical legitimacy of TPRS, but with very few citations, poor bibliographical information, and the mention of "research," which is difficult to find or is no longer on the websites. This is not a direct criticism of these websites; the Internet is a venue for promotion, and I am not suggesting that it should use the same theoretical, linear argumentation used in an academic setting.

In fact, this Internet phenomenon may provide valuable information to users of TPRS. Proponents of TPRS, such as Ray and Seely, point out some of the advantages of this online development:

> The Internet and the very possibility of the existence of highly interactive communication through such lists have provided an opportunity to improve more quickly and thoroughly than ever before. This phenomenon is an informal kind of research which allows, on a comparatively large scale, relatively quick testing in classrooms of hypotheses about how to teach and then revision of them, followed by subsequent testing of the revised hypotheses. To our knowledge (which is admittedly limited), this sort of interactive educational research has never been done before. It could serve as a model for educational research in other disciplines besides language teaching. (2002: xi)

This may very well be true. However, because TPRS is being used in many schools, its proponents need to move attempts to provide TPRS with theoretical legitimacy from the Internet to academia, where it can be properly explained and examined.

Personality Cult

When reading the aforementioned TPRS materials and websites, there is a

noticeable use of its proponents' names to promote TPRS. Ray has achieved a revered

status among TPRS enthusiasts, primarily because it is his creation, but also because of

the numerous workshops he provides each year. It appears that, at times, his name is

mentioned within a description of TPRS as an attempt to provide it with a certain amount

of legitimacy. This "personality cult" which has developed may allow other TPRS

enthusiasts to discuss it without providing additional information. An example of this

can be found in Gaab's introduction to TPRS materials, where she mentions something

called a "Barometer Student" as a means of assessment, and explains:

> An easy evaluation technique is to focus on a 'Barometer
> Student,' a term invented by Blaine Ray, the innovator of
> TPRS. The 'Barometer Student' refers to a student who is
> slightly below average, roughly in the fortieth percentile.
> The acquisition rate of a 'Barometer Student' is often an
> ideal indicator of how to pace your class, as the rate is slow
> enough to keep the majority of your lower students
> engaged and fast enough to avoid boring the top half of the
> class. (2003: vi)

In this statement, Gaab discusses below average students, "the fortieth percentile," a

student's "acquisition rate," and lower and higher level students with little theoretical

backing or explanation, and without a citation. Yet these terms and their logic achieve

apparent legitimacy because they have been preceded by a mention of Ray. Again, I am

not suggesting that Gaab's text is the appropriate venue for a detailed, theoretical

discussion, since it appears within the context of TPRS materials. However, additional

information, such as citations, is required to give credibility to specific TPRS techniques

that are discussed as if they are accepted practice. The idea of a "Barometer Student"

does seem to have a lot of intuitive value to it, and intuition is something that may not be out of place in an introduction to TPRS *materials*. Yet if TPRS is to take on legitimacy in an *academic setting*, it cannot rely merely on classroom intuition.

It is certainly understandable why an important figure such as Ray would be mentioned in conjunction with TPRS, as he is the progenitor of TPRS and one of its most visible enthusiasts. What is dangerous is when his ideas are used without citation and before they have been researched and examined, relying only on his mention to give statements credibility. This in turn leads to schools blindly adopting TPRS as the method of choice without critically evaluating whether it achieves what it claims to achieve. Determining a course for a school's foreign language curriculum is an important decision; adopting a method with little published research, and which relies on credibility by association, represents a frightening prospect for the future of FLT in the US. This does not mean that TPRS is not deserving of its popularity in high schools, but rather that this popularity should be supported by research, so that schools are able to make the informed decisions necessary for the future of foreign languages.

Classification

In the previous sections, TPRS was examined within the classroom and the curriculum. In order to better understand TPRS, it is critical to determine whether it is an approach, method, or technique. Whereas it is quite clear that TPRS is not an approach (but follows one), it is unclear whether it is a method or a technique. By attempting to classify TPRS, we encounter many of the same problems that others have encountered with TPR (see Richards and Rodgers, 1986 and Lovik, 1996). Beginning with the initial

distinctions and ideas of Anthony, Richards and Rodgers have explored these distinctions further and summarize as follows:

> According to Anthony's model, approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described. (1986: 15)

TPRS follows a specific approach, which is very similar to that of TPR. Since TPRS works on many of the ideas of James Asher's TPR (1969) and Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), it can be assumed that it follows an approach based on their ideas as well. The use of the verb in its imperative form is a central part of the initial stages of TPRS. Where TPRS differs, then, is in the move to the Storytelling Phase. While TPR emphasizes comprehension and de-emphasizes output and interaction, TPRS considers all three to be absolutely vital. Thus, though TPRS still sees the imbedding of grammar through commands as an essential part of its approach, TPRS values its learners' speech output as much as the comprehensible input they receive. Secondly, because there is such a reliance on Krashen's ideas, TPRS must be classified as a "natural" approach, as it views first and second language learning as parallel processes.

TPRS exhibits some characteristics of a method because it emphasizes which skills are to be taught (the reading of comprehensible input, comprehension before production), the content (the material covered within the PMSs), and its order of presentation (the gradual introduction of vocabulary). Many proponents of TPRS (including Ray) advocate its use into more advanced levels of learning, and their claims of success in this regard might indeed lead one to believe in its strength as a method.

20

However, some evidence exists that it might also be considered a technique, because it describes what actually takes place in the classroom. The PQA, the various story types to be used (PMS, mini-story, main story), and the guidelines for using these stories are all strategies to be used in the classroom. Because these strategies can be used independently of TPRS, they might ultimately constitute a technique. To suggest how TPRS may just be one technique used within a series of courses, Davidheiser notes the difficulty in carrying it past beginning stages:

> Although Asher and Ray advocate continuing TPR/TPRS into the more advanced levels of language learning, I have not always found it advantageous to continue TPRS in second year. This may simply be a result of their age and their conditioning from years of schooling with conceptual activity. Furthermore our second-year course brings together students accustomed to TPRS with others placing directly into it from high school who may have no knowledge of TPRS. Even so, I still retain some TPR techniques to introduce vocabulary and ask students to signal comprehension of the work at hand, rather than use English. (2002: 33)

It is unclear whether Davidheiser's possible suggestions for these difficulties are valid. It is not uncommon for students to switch from one method to another in the transition from high school to the college level. His claims of difficulty should certainly be the subject of further examination, though, along with comparisons with other university programs using TPRS. Regardless of the reasons behind the difficulties, however, it is at least foreseeable that TPRS might lose its potency as an overall method in later stages of instruction. Thus, it can be viewed as a technique, which, as Davidheiser mentions, can continue to be used in some measure in more advanced courses.

Richards and Rodgers continue by describing the movement of an approach to a method through its **design**. The **design** determines the skills, content, and goals to be

used in the method (1986: 20). The **procedure** is then how the method is implemented in the classroom, using various techniques, practices, and behaviors (1986: 26). Richards and Rodgers list six components of **design**: the **objectives**, the **syllabus**, the **types of learning and teaching activities, learner roles, teacher roles**, and the **role of instructional materials** (1986: 20).

Applying this framework to TPRS, the **objective** of TPRS is clearly oral proficiency. Through TPR, interaction with the teacher and other students, and output during the retelling of stories, students' ability to speak in the TL becomes the primary goal. Additionally, grammatical accuracy is mentioned by proponents such as Ray and Seely (2002) as an eventual objective of TPRS. Whether or not this objective is fulfilled is unclear. Grammar instruction is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, and Ray and Seely's claims of grammatical accuracy as an objective of TPRS remain controversial until they are properly discussed below.

The **syllabus** of TPRS introduces vocabulary in a gradual, incremental manner. Grammar instruction is inductive, and according to Williams (2002) and Gaab (2003) is not "sheltered," meaning that it is not introduced incrementally; grammar can be used "naturally" in the course of a story or the teacher's speech because students are expected to induce grammatical rules from what they hear over the course of time. This implies that because the various grammar points are imbedded into the PMS, there is no specific order for their introduction. Gaab seems to dispute this, however, when describing the introduction of verbs:

> [. . .] verbs are introduced in a conjugated state, one verb form at a time. Begin with the present tense, 3rd person singular. After several weeks of practice when students have become proficient with that verb form, continue

22

introducing each new verb form in the following order:
third person plural, first person singular, second person,
and first person plural. Finally, when introducing new verb
forms and tenses, be sure to use verbs with which students
are already familiar. Treat/teach (new) grammar as if it
were a new vocabulary item. (2003: iv)

A verb's various conjugations are certainly different grammatical points, and here Gaab

has suggested an order for their introduction. Additionally, new verb forms and tenses

are introduced, meaning that one form or tense is used before another. Finally, by

labeling grammar as "new," she is in fact implying an order of introduction. It is

impossible to treat grammar in the same manner as vocabulary if one should not be

"sheltered" and the other should. There appears to be an order for the introduction of

grammar, but in TPRS it appears to be arbitrary. Perhaps a redefinition of the term

"sheltered" is required to account for this discrepancy (for possible deviations on how

grammar is taught within the TPRS classroom, see above).

As with TPR, **learning and teaching activities** begin with imperative commands

in the TPR phase, and then move to the PMS and its related story types (described

above). The **role of a learner** is initially to listen and imitate the teacher's commands

and actions. Eventually, their role becomes more advanced as they are expected to

answer PQAs, retell portions of the PMSs, and change the perspective and tense of these

stories. The **teacher's role** is in the beginning extremely active, modeling the commands

for students and asking questions. The class is very teacher-centered at this point. The

teacher then moves into a slightly less active role (although in no way completely

inactive), as students will reconstruct the stories with fellow students. At this time,

teachers take on the role of a guide, helping students through the various retellings and

changes of perspective and tense, and the class becomes more learner-centered. When

the teacher's role is more active, the goal should be to provide as much input as possible.

The **role of instructional materials** is stronger in TPRS than in TPR. Whereas

both rely on classroom objects and realia to associate linguistic forms with actions or

gestures, TPRS has a "text" in the form of the PMS. Some teachers using TPRS may be

required to use specific textbooks in the classroom, creating in effect two texts (the

textbook and the PMS). Davidheiser (2002) and Ray and Seely (2002) discuss

opportunities for incorporating textbooks and TPRS when this occurs.

What follows are two examples of the **procedure** of implementing TPRS into the

classroom. The first, from Williams (2002), is within the framework of a high school

classroom, whereas the second, from Davidheiser (2002), is within the framework of a

university classroom.

Williams describes how TPRS might be used over a five-day period in a high

school German class. A different PMS is introduced on Monday, Tuesday, and

Wednesday. Williams outlines the new vocabulary words to be used, which are

introduced with gestures, points out the cognates used, and describes a PQA session. For

example, if a new vocabulary item is the word "anrufen" (*to call on the phone*), a PQA

might be the following:

- Ich rufe meinen Freund an. Wen rufst du an? Deinen Freund
  oder deine Schlange?
- Wer ruft dich an? Claudia Schiffer oder Barney? / Arnold
  Schwarzenegger oder Pee Wee Herman?
- Du rufst deine Mutter an. Warum rufst du deine Mutter an? Ist
  sie krank, oder bist du krank? (2002: 10)

(
- *I'm calling my friend on the phone. Who are you calling?*
  Your friend or your snake?

24

- *Who calls you on the phone? Claudia Schiffer or Barney? /
  Arnold Schwarzenegger or Pee Wee Herman?*
- *You call your mother on the phone. Why do you call your
  mother? Is she sick, or are you sick?*)

Williams continues by outlining the characters for the stories, which the teacher assigns

to students, the props for the stories, and then gives an example of a PMS for each day.

The following is an excerpt from one of the PMSs:

> Es ist 3 Uhr. Das Telefon klingelt.
> [Student] #1 nimmt das Telefon ab und sagt: "(last name)".
> [Student] #2 sagt: "Ruf bei Markus an! Auf
> Wiederhören!"
> [Student] #1 fragt: "Was? Wer ist Markus?"
> [Student] #2 sagt: "Auf Wiederhören!" Tüüt . . . Tüüt . . .
> [Student] #1 sagt: "uh, danke." (2002: 15)
>
> (*It's three in the morning. The telephone rings.*
> *Student #1 picks up the telephone and says: "(last name)".*
> *Student #2 says: "Call Markus! Bye!"*
> *Student #1 asks: "What? Who's Markus?"*
> *Student #2 says: "Bye!" [dial tone]*
> *Student #1 says: "uh, thanks."*)

On Thursday, the Mini-Story is introduced, combining the vocabulary words from

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. For Friday, Williams outlines a sample test for

assessment. The students have four pictures and a "does not apply" option to choose

from. They then hear six statements in German, describing parts of the pictures shown,

and must match the pictures with the statements, which serve as a check for listening

comprehension. They must then match the pictures with written statements as well,

which serve as a check for reading comprehension. Then the students are required to

write two sentences describing one of the pictures.

The preceding description follows a typical week in a high school TPRS

classroom. Davidheiser outlines classroom activities in a university German class over

the course of six days, using a story from Ray and Neilson's <u>Look, I Can Talk!</u> with eight pictures, or frames, called <u>Die Verabredung</u> (*The Date*):

> It tells the story of Helmut's phone call, inviting Sabine to a dance. Both do extensive preparation involving daily hygiene and dressing. Helmut arrives to pick up Sabine, meets her mother and waits until she is ready. They drive to the dance and after two hours take a break. Unfortunately Helmut stumbles in handing her her drink and spills it on her new dress. Angered she demands to be taken home and refuses to go out with him again. (2002: 29)

On the first day, the students review ten vocabulary words from other mini-stories, learn ten new vocabulary items, and act out the first four frames of the story in pairs in front of the class. On the second day, the students review the vocabulary, review the first four frames, and act out the fifth and sixth frames. On day three, the students act out the first six frames in pairs and in front of the class, act out the seventh and eighth frames in the same manner, and complete in-class exercises, which Davidheiser lists as "true and false, complete the sentences, answer the questions, [and] place the actions from the story in chronological order" (2002: 29). On day four, students act out all eight frames in pairs. Student pairs act out the story before the class, alternating between the even- and odd-numbered frames. Students turn in a written assignment, which is the story in their own words. On the fifth day, the students review the entire story and act out the story once again in pairs before the class. Students then retell alternate versions of the story that have already been prepared at home. They do this in pairs and then some retell the stories before the class. On the sixth day, students who weren't able to retell alternate versions of the story on the previous day, act them out before the class. Students hand in an original story of their own and act out this story to partners and before the entire class.

Finally, students preview vocabulary for the next story. During this six-day period, students practice features of the language specific to the story, which, in the case of <u>Die Verabredung</u>, include reflexive and separable-prefix verbs (2002: 29).

It is important to remember, though, that both of these procedural descriptions might vary extensively depending on the teacher and the content. The previous examples illustrate the possible path a TPRS class might take either at the high school or university level.

Chapter 2

ASSUMPTIONS, CLAIMS, AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Assumptions and Claims

Following the practical discussion of TPRS in Chapter 1 and preceding a theoretical discussion thereof in the next section, it is important to discuss its assumptions and claims. Proponents of TPRS discuss certain assumptions behind TPRS about learners of a Foreign Language, although these assumptions seem to be made purely based on the experience of TPRS teachers. Nowhere are they backed up by research or citations, which calls into question their validity.

According to Williams, it can be assumed first of all that students do not know English grammar, and thus will be confused by learning the TL grammar. Secondly, TPRS works on the assumption that students are doing increasingly less studying at home, and by extension, less homework. He claims that language learning becomes more appealing to students because it works around some of these assumptions (2002: 1).

Some claims of TPRS, which are mentioned by Ray and Seely (2002), Williams (2002), Gaab (2003), and Davidheiser (2001, 2002), are the following: 1) It is action-based, not allowing students to become bored during instruction. 2) It emphasizes communication, and this disposes of students' frustration with grammar. 3) There is a "quick success" associated with the method; within a relatively short amount of time, students are able to use their TL in several situations. 4) TPRS helps students take ownership of their learning. 5) Students receive more comprehensible input in a TPRS class. 6) Students feel included and validated. Perhaps the two largest claims by

28

proponents of TPRS are that 7) more students have success with it than with traditional methods of language teaching, and 8) that this student success creates satisfaction with language programs.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Having stated some of the assumptions and claims of TPRS in the previous section, they should now be discussed within a theoretical framework. Despite the dearth of research into the theory of TPRS, several of its proponents have suggested some possible theoretical components, including Ray and Seely (2002) and Williams (2002). Williams has even gone so far as to list these components as being the theories behind TPRS. In both cases, very few citations have been provided to support these claims. In the following two sections, theoretical components have been broken down into two groups. First, the aforementioned "suggestions" are discussed. Secondly, theoretical underpinnings that further explain how TPRS works are examined.

Proposed Theoretical Components of TPRS

According to Williams (2002) and Ray and Seely (2002), some of the major theoretical components of TPRS are the following: 1) Total Physical Response (TPR) is used as a basis for later instruction. 2) There is a distinction between acquisition and learning and an emphasis on acquisition. 3) Grammar is imbedded and its instruction is descriptive. 4) Under the idea of Comprehensible Input (CI), the majority of what is learned must be made comprehensible to the students, and there is a large emphasis on reading, so that students read as much CI as possible. 5) Success is achieved through

promotion of the low affective filter. 6) Vocabulary is introduced incrementally, but grammar is not. 7) Finally, if the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught correctly.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR's reliance on connecting linguistic forms with actions, gestures, and motions is what makes it so important in the opening stages of TPRS. It is used as a primer for vocabulary that can later be used during the Storytelling Phase. This use of actions, gestures, and motions does not end, however, with the end of the TPR Phase. Within the PMSs, linguistic forms continue to be connected with the gestures that the teacher uses to tell the story. Additionally, the students are encouraged to use these gestures when re-telling the stories as well. There is considerable evidence in modern psychology to support the idea that a primary function of gesture production is to aid a speaker in communicating the meaning of what is being said (Woodall & Folger, 1981). Others (Riseborough, 1981; Rogers, 1978) have shown an increased word recall when a story was accompanied by gestures. More recent research (Krauss, Dushay, Chen, and Rauscher, 1995) has disputed these claims, showing that gesture viewing did not increase item recognition.

Although these studies looked at the role of gestures in aiding listeners' lexical recall, a recent study by Frick-Horbury and Guttentag examined the effects of hand gesture production on a speaker's lexical retrieval and recall and the results of limiting and restricting these gestures. Using support from previous articles, they suggested a role that gestures might play in aiding lexical retrieval and recall:

One possible reason that gestures might aid lexical access
at times of verbal retrieval failure is that the gesture may be
part of the memory representation of the lexical item, and
retrieval of the motor component could serve as a
mechanism for elaboration of lexical production. (1998: 45)

Two experiments were performed by Frick-Horbury and Guttentag to study the effects of

restricting gesture production. The first examined the effects of restricting hand

movements on lexical retrieval as a function of higher or lower verbal skills. The second

was designed as a control to test whether the differences found in performance between

the restricted and unrestricted participants in the first experiment were robust if they were

not required to purposefully hold an object in order to prevent hand gestures. Their

findings showed that the restricted participants retrieved fewer lexical items in response

to word definitions and the control experiment showed the differences in Experiment 1 to

be robust. This suggests that gesture production may have an important role for the

speaker as well as the listener.

The restriction of hand gestures did not, however, extend to the recall phase of the

experiment, and thus, there is little evidence from this study to link gesture production

directly with lexical recall. Previous studies (Backman, Nilsson, & Chalom, 1986; Saltz

& Donnenwerth-Nolan, 1981) had shown a connection between overt actions and the

retention of related verbal materials, and there was indeed higher recall by the

unrestricted participants in Horbury and Guttentag's study. However, this greater

retention could be attributed to the group differences in the number of words actually

retrieved in response to the word definitions.

In an additional study by Frick-Horbury (2002a), the effects of hand gestures as

cues for lexical recall were tested on 48 undergraduates for the first experiment, and 16

additional undergraduates for the control experiment, in which it was tested whether the facilitation of gesture cueing is consistent over time and order change. In both experiments, participants using self-generated gestures as cues recalled more words than those with no gesture cueing or those cued with someone else's hand gestures. Though the exact nature of hand gestures' aid in lexical recall awaits further experimentation, Frick-Horbury suggested the following:

> [. . .] self-generated gestures as cues should function in the same manner as self-generated verbal cues. In other words, because gestures are produced simultaneously with the verbal event, they could be seen as part of the encoding-retrieval environment. Thus, if the producer is cued with the gesture, it seems reasonable to assume that the verbal association could easily be recalled as part of a reliable encoding-retrieval situation. Furthermore, because gestures are idiosyncratic and thus assumed to be distinctive only to the producer, self-generated gestures should aid recall only of the producer. Additionally, like verbal cues, gestures should be good cues for recall over long retention periods because they specifically reconstruct the encoding event. (2002a: 3)

Though this suggestion once again calls into question the supposition that gesture production aids listeners' lexical retrieval and recall (and thus, the reliance of TPRS on the connection between the two), it is clear that gesture production may be useful when later carried out by students during the retelling phase.

Finally, in another study by Frick-Horbury (2002b), the effects of hand gestures on lexical recall were tested among students with high and low verbal skill levels (as determined by their SAT verbal scores). The results of the study showed that the use of self-generated hand gestures assisted with lexical recall in both groups, and consistently reduced the loss of recall in those participants at a lower verbal skill level so that they performed similarly to participants at a higher verbal level. Additionally, the

performance of the lower-level participants was significantly different from those in the control group with low verbal skills and no use of hand gestures. The implication of these results is that using hand gestures can compensate for lower verbal skills and allow these participants to increase their performance to that of the higher level participants. This seems especially important in light of the claim that TPRS is more successful with all types of students than other methods, which tend to appeal to better language learners. Additional research is required to determine whether the use of hand gestures aids lexical retrieval and recall within the framework of Foreign Language instruction.

The Ideas of Stephen Krashen

TPRS relies on a number of elements of the Monitor Model (Krashen and Terrell, 1983) for its theoretical legitimacy. Stephen Krashen developed this extremely influential model of learning in the 1970s. As important as Krashen's influence on the field of FLT has been, it has met with widespread criticism. McLaughlin (1978) and Gregg (1984) in particular have pointed out several inconsistencies within the Monitor Model. Nevertheless, these hypotheses remain important in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies, and their contributions towards SLA research are significant. McLaughlin discusses the benefits of Krashen's model, while at the same time criticizing its lack of objectivity:

> I believe that the Monitor Model does have a basis in subjective experience, but I do not believe that subjective experience should be the testing grounds for a theory of language processing. Krashen has called our attention to certain interesting phenomena [. . .] his pedagogical advice -- that classroom instruction should be oriented more toward communication and less toward formal rules and error correction -- is undoubtedly well taken. Yet his

model fails, I believe, because its empirical underpinnings
are weak. (1978: 329)

The Monitor Model's empirical underpinnings have proven weak because they are not

falsifiable. Yet the "interesting phenomena" McLaughlin describes contain elements that

have opened new areas of research. His hypotheses, despite their inconsistencies, are

pedagogically valuable because of their implications.

Three of the hypotheses of the Monitor Model are important parts of TPRS.

These are the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis (Comprehensible

Input), and the Affective Filter Hypothesis.

1.   Acquisition-Learning Distinction and Imbedded Grammar

Within the Monitor Model (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), Krashen postulates that

learners have two different ways of developing knowledge of a second language. He

makes a distinction between acquisition and learning. Acquisition, according to Krashen,

is very similar to first language development among children. It is an unconscious

process, and thus, grammatical structures and rules are acquired unconsciously, i. e.

without knowledge that they are being acquired. Learning is the conscious knowledge of

the rules of a language, or being able to talk about the rules and grammar of the TL.

With acquisition, learners are concentrating on the meaning of the language being used to

communicate. Learning serves as a "check" on the acquired system, focusing more on

the form.

As will become clear throughout this discussion of Krashen's ideas, however,

there are several problems with this distinction. Much of its criticism lies in the way it

separates acquisition and learning into two distinct systems. Krashen's hypothesis makes

34

clear that items that have been learned in a formal setting cannot be integrated into the acquired system. This says, by extension, that learners in a formal setting would never be able to generate utterances, which is obviously untrue. The fact that the existence of two separate systems cannot be proved ultimately calls this division into question.

Yet despite these criticisms, users of TPRS claim that it relies on the *acquisition* of a language within the framework of this acquisition-learning distinction. Ray and Seely (2002) and Williams (2002) argue that because grammar is not directly discussed, it is taught indirectly through the grammatical forms presented in the various PMSs. Language is presented in a "natural manner," where that which the learners hear (see discussion of Comprehensible Input below) is more important than any sort of explicit instruction. Krashen and Terrell describe this as the "Great Paradox of Language Teaching," stating that "[l]anguage is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning" (1983: 55). Thus, because there is an underlying assumption of TPRS that students will acquire language and its grammatical forms better by hearing it, and not by explicitly learning it, it can be said that TPRS parallels Krashen's idea of acquisition. The existence of two separate systems remains unfalsifiable, though, which makes TPRS's grounding in this distinction questionable.

On the other hand, Davidheiser believes that some form of explicit learning may be necessary, claiming that learners within a TPRS context desire at least guidelines in terms of grammar instruction. As he states:

> It is necessary, however, to do concerted grammar
> instruction -- first, because students insist on it year after
> year and ask questions that elicit grammatical explanation,
> and second, because colleagues who teach these students in

35

later semesters cannot identify with a completely natural approach. (2001: 53)

It is undoubtedly true that many students may indeed ask for some sort of explicit instruction, but this demand for grammar instruction which occurs "year after year" may just be a result of the students' previous conditioning in other language courses. Students' demand for more grammar instruction does not necessarily indicate that they are not learning grammar indirectly within TPRS. This may just be a form of control the students are exercising over the teacher. I'm not suggesting that Davidheiser's claims have no validity. However, altering TPRS in such a manner as to dispute one of its primary theoretical components is something that needs to be examined much more closely before it can be incorporated into a general description of TPRS. Finally, Davidheiser's last comment concerning colleagues teaching in later semesters may be the most telling. A disconnect between instructors using TPRS in lower-division courses and those with a more traditional stance on grammar instruction may place pressure on the TPRS instructor for its inclusion.

Although there is an absence of empirical data to determine whether this further grammar instruction has any effect on the way students learn (as opposed to those students in TPRS classrooms where grammar is completely imbedded), there may be some demand for explicit grammar instruction. As stated earlier, Ray and Neilson (2000) believe that it is certainly needed in the higher-level courses. This demand, though, may be coming more from the faculty and not from the students, as there are few other proponents of TPRS who have suggested that explicit instruction be included at these early stages. Davidheiser's comments may also rely on his instruction within a university, whereas other instructors tend to be using TPRS in high schools. A statement

on the TPRS Publishing website claims that preliminary test results show that TPRS's use of imbedded grammar is actually more effective, pointing to an article by Marsh (1997). Marsh mentions that students across the country using TPRS have higher test scores, though there are no supporting data or citations. Additional inquiries revealed that the test scores could be obtained on the archives of *moretprs*, a Yahoo Group on the Internet for experienced users of TPRS. A search provided several entries claiming that initial results on the New York State Proficiency Test have shown increased scores after using TPRS in the classroom. One Spanish teacher reports testing 58 students, with fourteen receiving 95% or better, including two receiving 100%, and eleven receiving grades between 90 and 94%. 80% of the students received 80 or better, and there was only one failing student with 63%. Another teacher (language was not mentioned) discusses comparisons between the 2002 (before TPRS) and 2003 (after TPRS) results. The average test score increased from 55.29% to 67.73%, with the number passing increasing from 32% to 70%. Additionally, there was an increase from 8% to 20% who scored over 80%. A French teacher reports on her ten students' scores after the first year of TPRS, stating that they received the following grades: 100, 98, 97, 93, 93, 92, 89, 85, 84, and 74. 80% of the students scored at 85% or higher, which is considered mastery level. These "results" do seem to be encouraging and quite promising. However, they are merely anecdotal, and were not included as part of a larger empirical study to determine the effectiveness of TPRS. Additionally, it is unclear whether the New York State Proficiency Test is the appropriate from of assessment to determine if TPRS helps students acquire grammar better than other methods. A large scale study, perhaps undertaken by some of those teachers involved, would be necessary to provide any real

evidence of improvement in the area of grammar. In light of the lack of hard empirical evidence, this question remains open to future research.

2.   Comprehensible Input and Imbedded Grammar

The Input Hypothesis is the central idea of Krashen's Monitor Model (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). He believes that learners of a language need to hear or read language input that is slightly above their current knowledge. Comprehensible Input (CI) is represented as $i + 1$, where i stands for the learner's current knowledge. Using input that is far beyond the learner's abilities or that the learner is already comfortable with serves no purpose, because it is only input that is slightly above the learner's current knowledge which will improve their language skills. Once the learner has acquired this new knowledge, the instructor increases the input by one ($i + 1$), where $i + 1$ represents the stage immediately following i in a natural order of acquisition. Krashen emphasized that a learner's utterances are the result of acquisition, not the cause thereof. Additionally, explicit grammar instruction is considered unnecessary if there is a sufficient amount of CI, since it will be provided intrinsically in the input.

There are two main problems with this concept, as many have pointed out (see Gass and Selinker, 2001; Gregg, 1984). To begin with, the amount (+ 1) is unspecified. Because it represents more of a metaphor or pseudo-formula, it is unclear how much input 1 represents, how to define each 'level' of knowledge, and exactly how much CI is needed to move to the next level. Secondly, just because we can "comprehend" certain grammatical structures within specific input, this does not necessarily mean that we have acquired them as well.

It has been shown that comprehension and acquisition build a far more complicated system than that described by Krashen (Gass and Selinker, 2001). Factors such as interaction and output play additional roles in the internalization of language, which is why oral production is considered such a vital part of the modern foreign language classroom. This does not suggest that the concept of CI is unimportant. Despite the problems associated with Krashen's definitions of CI, it is generally accepted by FL teachers that it is a necessary component of acquiring a foreign language (Lee and van Patten, 1995). However, there is little evidence that learners will acquire a language just by receiving CI (Lightbown and Spada, 1999: 150).

Thus, in the context of TPRS, CI coupled with the appropriate forms of interaction and output, does have theoretical legitimacy. Learners are exposed to CI in all phases of TPRS. Again, grammar is imbedded, which may or may not be advantageous for the learners (as discussed in the previous section). They are then required to interact with the teacher within the PQA and to produce output as well. Finally, output is required when the learners retell the stories; grammatical structures are practiced by moving the stories into different perspectives and tenses. Therefore, it can be said that within a TPRS classroom, there are examples of input, interaction, and output. While it is clear, though, that learners receive large amounts of CI, what is unclear is whether the amounts of interaction and output are appropriate, and how often these three aspects are used in tandem.

The one component of TPRS that Williams (2002) and Ray and Seely (2002) have stressed, but which does not seem to play a large role in the TPRS classroom, is the reading of CI. If, as Williams suggests, "students should read as much comprehensible

input as possible" (2002: 2), there should be more of a focus on reading outside of the classroom. The strategies for teaching TPRS of Williams and Davidheiser don't include very much reading in their outlines. Ray and Seely (2002) suggest materials that Ray and others have developed as reading materials, as well as FL versions of American juvenile novels. They suggest an emphasis on reading in the third and fourth years of instruction, although the reading material does not consist of authentic TL texts. This may be a shortcoming of TPRS, which is discussed in more depth in the context of incremental vocabulary acquisition below.

3.   Promotion of the Low Affective Filter

Language anxiety has been considered an important issue in the field of FLT for the past 15 years, but has played a part in studies previous to the more recent research in this area. Krashen proposed the idea of the Low Affective Filter within his Monitor Model (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). As discussed by Gass and Selinker (2001), affect includes not only anxiety, but motivation, attitude, and self-confidence, as well. According to Krashen, if a learner's affect rises to a high enough point, it creates a Filter, blocking input from passing through to the learner. Thus, language acquisition is prevented by high levels of affect. If the Affective Filter is lowered, increased input is allowed to enter. Additionally, learners with lower affect should, as a result, have better attitudes towards learning the TL, and seek more input.

Several closer examinations of the concept of the Affective Filter have since shown some of its problems (see Gass and Selinker, 2001; Gregg, 1984). Most of these problems stem from a lack of understanding (or explanation) of how the Filter might

work. Since learners will inevitably internalize some, but not all rules, it is assumed under the conception of the Affective Filter that the Filter has blocked this input from being internalized. This seems to imply that affect is selective in which grammatical structures it allows to pass through the Filter; that it is able to recognize and differentiate between them. Since it is not clear whether this selectivity even exists, and because it cannot be explained, it is difficult to prove the existence of an actual "Filter."

However, there is significant research to show that anxiety does affect the way a learner performs. "Language studies have revealed a consistent relationship between anxiety and foreign language proficiency" (Terrell and Koch, 1991: 110). There is evidence that anxiety can both increase a learner's test performance and hinder it. Regarding oral proficiency, the research shows that anxiety will usually have a negative effect, oftentimes skewing a teacher's evaluation thereof.

Thus, the claim by TPRS proponents that by lowering anxiety in the classroom, students are more likely to acquire the TL, may have legitimacy. In a study by Terrell and Koch (1991) to determine which activities and techniques in the Natural Approach were considered most anxiety-producing and most comfort-producing, students in the first two years of Natural Approach Spanish classes at the University of California, Irvine completed a questionnaire in the eighth week of the trimester. 119 students completed the forms, and some of the activities and techniques deemed comfort-producing by the students were the following: total physical response commands, the use of pictures to present vocabulary, the personalization of vocabulary, and the acquisition of vocabulary through association. These are all integral parts of TPRS, and seem to support the idea that their employment does indeed reduce anxiety. However, it is important to consider

that these are self-evaluations performed by the students, and that the findings do not represent a true empirical assessment. Furthermore, Terrell and Koch warn: "Instructors cannot choose activities, techniques, or even a language-teaching method or approach without taking into consideration the students' individual learning styles, interests, and affective reactions" (1991: 124). Finally, in addition to taking the students' personalities into consideration, the teacher's personality may play a large role in determining which techniques and activities may work the best.

Incremental Vocabulary Acquisition

In TPRS, the PMS is used as the primary means of teaching within the classroom. The main goal in each daily PMS is to provide students with CI in the form of new and recycled vocabulary. This vocabulary should be introduced in a gradual and incremental manner. According to Gaab's (2003) description of TPRS pedagogy, students need to hear each vocabulary item sixty to seventy-five times if they are to internalize it, whereas Ray and Seely (2002) state that students should hear new vocabulary items fifty to one hundred times.

Although an overall theory of vocabulary acquisition does not exist, there is ample research on its various aspects. It has been established within this research that words are learned in an incremental manner, and not on a dualistic scale, where they are either in a state of not being acquired or being acquired (Meara, 1984; Smith, 1984). In Schmitt's discussion of the incremental nature of vocabulary, he discusses how repeated exposure is necessary for a learner to acquire the various types of word knowledge (form, meaning, spoken form, register, etc.):

On the first exposure to a new word, all that is likely to be picked up is some sense of word form and meaning. If the exposure is verbal, the person might remember what other words it rhymes with or how many syllables it has. If the exposure came from a written text, the person may only remember the first few letters of the word. Because it was only a single exposure, it is only possible to gain the single meaning sense that was used in that context. It is also possible that the word class was noticed, but not much else. As the person gains a few more exposures, these features will be consolidated, and perhaps some other meaning senses will be encountered. But it will probably be relatively late in the acquisition process before a person develops intuitions about the word's frequency, register constraints, and collocational behavior, simply because these features require a large number of examples to determine the appropriate values. (2000: 117-118)

Thus, TPRS's insistence on multiple exposures to vocabulary that is learned in an incremental fashion is grounded in lexis research. However, Schmitt additionally differentiates between incidental and explicit learning. Incidental learning mirrors the manner in which children learn their L1, where vocabulary is heard in conversation. Explicit learning draws direct focus to the lexical information to be learned. A related concept to explicit learning (taken from the field of psychology) is the idea of deep processing, where information is better retained the more it is manipulated and used. In explicit vocabulary learning, words are better retained the more they are used and manipulated. An example of incidental learning is within a "communicative environment," where learners hear large amounts of vocabulary through what a teacher says or reads. An example of explicit learning would be to combine a lexical item's phonological form and meaning with a mental image.

Schmitt posits that both types of learning are needed for L2 learners, and that the two are complementary. Nation (1995) believes that more frequently used words should

be taught explicitly, and that infrequent words can be learned through incidental learning. The Natural Approach that TPRS takes in teaching vocabulary, providing large amounts of CI, can be seen as incidental vocabulary learning. Its combination of phonological form and meaning with a mental image (e. g. a gesture or a picture) can be viewed as explicit learning. Schmitt terms this type of learning strategy as a "memory strategy," where a new lexical item is related with previous knowledge, and includes TPR under this heading. He adds:

> It is worth noting that memory strategies generally involve the kind of elaborative mental processing that facilitates long-term retention. This takes time, but the time expended will be well spent if used on important words that really need to be learned, such as high-frequency vocabulary and technical words essential in a particular learner's field of study. A learner may not have time to 'deeply process' every word encountered, but it is certainly worth attempting for key lexical items. (2000: 135)

This would certainly support the value of TPRS's "memory strategy" of connecting linguistic forms and images. There is little research, however, to back up the aforementioned claim that a word must be heard sixty to seventy-five times, or fifty to one hundred times, in order to be acquired. Some studies (Nation, 1990: 44) have shown that a word requires five to sixteen or more repetitions to be learned, but there does not seem to be a clear consensus. What is clear, though, is that incidental and explicit learning both require large amounts of recycling in terms of the vocabulary exposure that they provide. Schmitt warns, however, that with explicit learning, recycling must be a conscious part of that study program; that it must develop a structured strategy to repeatedly provide vocabulary within the classroom, where there are multiple uses and manipulations of the lexical items to be retained. TPRS seems to provide a large amount

of recycling within the context of explicit learning, especially in the TPR Phase, where high-frequency words that are essential to the Storytelling Phase are emphasized. In the Storytelling Phase, words are then introduced both explicitly and incidentally when introducing a new PMS, and these words are recycled from one PMS to the next. This focus on the incremental acquisition of vocabulary appears to be theoretically sound in light of the current research.

However, Schmitt also emphasizes the importance of reading in vocabulary acquisition. Reading exposure should be extensive, meaning that it is both consistent and longitudinal. Proponents of TPRS admit that its lack of reading exposure may be one of its shortcomings. Williams (2002) agrees that reading is vital to vocabulary acquisition in TPRS, but says that there is not enough reading material that is appropriate for the beginning levels of TPRS instruction. Davidheiser states the following:

> More reading practice may also be needed. My work with TPRS up to now has included very little reading matter beyond what was in the stories themselves. When we got to second semester German I assigned outside reading, and students found it overly demanding. (2002: 32)

What this suggests is that more reading materials may need to be developed in conjunction with the existing ones. It might also mean that teachers using TPRS may need to work on better strategies of incorporating authentic texts into a reading component in their curriculum.

Teacher Carries Burden of Success or Failure

It has been suggested that within the TPRS classroom, the teacher carries the burden of success or failure. As Williams states, "if the student hasn't learned, the

teacher hasn't taught correctly" (2002: 2). The implication behind this statement is that if students are not performing well in the TL, the teacher has not followed the correct guidelines for teaching TPRS. This claim sounds like it is based more on intuition than actual theoretical support, and seems to ignore research to the contrary. Lightbown and Spada explain that in many areas of acquisition, students must oftentimes be developmentally ready to acquire features of the TL, and that although various vocabulary items can be taught at any time, learners rely on more than pedagogical intervention:

> [. . .] research has also shown that learners can learn a great deal that no-one ever teaches them. They are able to use their own internal learning mechanisms to discover many of the complex rules and relationships which underlie the language they wish to learn. Students, in this sense, may be said to learn much more than they are taught. (1999: 169)

In other words, parts of a learner's acquisition may occur independently of a teacher's instruction. Additionally, studies into acquisition order have shown that a teacher can affect natural orders only in an insignificant way (Lightbown, 1983). Finally, non-language influences play a large role in the way a learner acquires a FL (Gass and Selinker, 2001). Lightbown and Spada, after analyzing research into the effects of form-focused instruction (or the lack thereof) within a communicative environment, found that some very talented learners would succeed in the TL regardless of what method had been used (1999: 149).

While it is certainly foreseeable that a teacher's adherence to a method or technique's guidelines is necessary for it to be effective, to claim that a learner's acquisition relies solely on the instructor places too much responsibility on the teacher and ignores extra-pedagogical factors (such as the natural order of acquisition or non-

language influences) which may play an additional role in the acquisition of the TL. It is possible that this type of pressure may be one factor that leads to the difficulty in maintaining energy within TPRS instruction (Williams, 2002: 23).

Further Theoretical Underpinnings

Though not specifically mentioned by proponents of TPRS, the following components appear to be some of its important theoretical underpinnings. They suggest areas that may require additional research to determine their value and potential benefits for learners, and to determine whether or not they coincide with the goals of the National Standards.

First and Second Language Comparisons

As mentioned earlier, Krashen's ideas are based on the assumption that child and adult language processes are the same and parallel. Because Krashen's ideas are considered so important to TPRS, it is necessary to examine this assumption in greater detail, and to discuss its relevancy to TPRS.

Within SLA literature, there is still much debate over how similar first (L1) and second language (L2) processes are. Gass and Selinker (2001) break this debate into two broad, opposing views: The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (see Bley-Vroman, 1989 and Schachter, 1988) and the Access to Universal Grammar (UG) Hypothesis (see White, 2000). Central to both of these arguments is Chomsky's idea of a Universal Grammar (1965), which posits that all languages have common innate principles. These

common principles would explain children's rapid and consistently successful L1

acquisition and form the basis for the arguments on either side of the debate.

The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (see Bley-Vroman, 1989 and Schachter,

1988) states that L1 and L2 learning processes are different. As Gass and Selinker

explain:

> The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis starts from the belief that with regard to language learning, children and adults are different in many important ways. For example, the ultimate attainment reached by children and adults differs. In normal situations, children always reach a state of 'complete' knowledge of their native language. In second language acquisition (at least, adult second language acquisition), not only is 'complete' knowledge not always attained, it is rarely, if ever, attained. (2001: 174)

The Fundamental Difference Hypothesis proposes additional differences. One difference

concerns learning how to use language in varying social situations. Whereas an adult has

already learned how to perform within these settings, and concentrates primarily on

learning the L2, a child must learn both. Another difference concerns the idea of

equipotentiality (Schachter, 1988). Equipotentiality states that children are able to learn

any language as their L1, with no language being easier to learn than any other. Adults

learning an L2, on the other hand, may find specific languages more difficult to learn

than others because of the language relatedness between the native language (NL) and the

TL. Finally, the non-language influences of motivation and attitude play a role in L2

language learning processes. All normal children, however, will learn their L1 regardless

of these factors. These differences point to the primary assumption of the Fundamental

Difference Hypothesis, which states that adult L2 learners do not have access to the UG

which children have when learning their L1. What is formed instead is an approximation

of UG (built from the final state of the L1), which is used to learn the L2, instead of a complete UG, which is used to learn the L1.

On the other side of the debate is the Access to UG Hypothesis. Although the fundamental argument of the Hypothesis is that L2 learners have access to some form of UG, there are varying views on how this system of learning might look. White (2000) points out that these views' differences depend on how much weight they accord transfer from the L1 and access to UG. There are four primary views. 1) **No transfer of the NL with full access to UG** states that learners approach an L1 and an L2 in the same way, and that learners are able to separate the two, with no transfer from the NL. 2) **Full transfer of the NL with full access to UG** posits that the final state of L1 acquisition is the beginning point of the L2 acquisition process. This is similar to the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis, with the difference being that here, L2 learners still have access to UG if the NL system becomes incapable of handling part of the learning process. 3) **Partial transfer of the NL with full access to UG** is similar to the previous view, because L2 learners are able to draw on the NL and the UG. It differs, though, by stating that the L2 learner accesses the NL and the UG for different properties in the course of L2 acquisition. 4) **Partial transfer of the NL with partial access to UG** states that an L2 can never be completely acquired, because a learner is only able to draw on portions of the NL and the UG.

There is little consensus on which view of L2 learning is correct. Furthermore, as Gass and Selinker explain, research into the existence of UG principles (features common across all languages) and UG parameters (features that vary across languages) has also

yielded mixed results on whether L2 learners have UG access, access to UG through the

NL, or no UG access:

> There are data supporting the view that UG constrains the grammars that learners can come up with; there are data arguing against this position. Thus, the answer to the question of whether L2 acquisition is fundamentally the same as L1 acquisition is *no*; the answer to the question of whether L2 acquisition is fundamentally different from L1 acquisition is also *no*. (2001: 182)

Thus, there are too many areas left unanswered to state with confidence that L1 and L2

learning processes are the same. It is obvious that there are similarities and differences

between them. This fact, however, does not necessarily undermine the basis of TPRS

with respect to Krashen's beliefs regarding L1 and L2 processes. Their similarities imply

that *certain areas* within the processes may indeed be parallel, and these parallels may be

an essential part of the theoretical workings of TPRS. It is clear from the earlier

discussion on CI that students rely on hearing a large amount of input, as do children,

when learning their L1. As stated under "Personal Testimony" in the preface to Ray and

Neilson:

> There are a great many differences between the high school student and my daughter learning her first language. I believe, however, that we as foreign language teachers must begin to focus on the few similarities if we are to give our students greater opportunities for successful second language acquisition. (2000: ii)

What becomes obvious from this discussion is that L2 acquisition is an extremely

complex process, and that TPRS may require additional elements beyond those involved

in L1 learning to effectively teach a language. Specifically, research exploring how

successful TPRS is will be needed to determine what these additional elements might be.

Narrative Theory

A crucial element of TPRS is its Storytelling Phase. After the TPR Phase, Storytelling becomes the primary means of instruction. Ray and Seely suggest that Storytelling "is such an effective vehicle that we wonder whether a case might be made for storytelling being the main way in which first language acquisition happens" (2002: 17). Because TPRS relies so heavily on comparisons between L1 and L2 acquisition, a closer look at the value of a story and its narrative is required to determine how this may affect the TPRS student.

There is support for the idea that telling and interpreting a story are rather complex cognitive processes. Herman (2001) moves narrative theory into the realms of linguistics and the cognitive sciences, suggesting that a target of narrative analysis should be the ways in which interpreters reconstruct "storyworlds," which are created by certain narrative cues. He suggests a "story logic," which refers to not only the production of stories, but to their interpretation as well:

> It is not just that stories *have* a logic consisting of design principles that [. . .] operate at relatively local as well as relatively global levels of narrative structure. More than this, narrative constitutes a logic in its own right, providing human beings with one of their primary resources for organizing and comprehending experience. (Herman, 2001: 28)

According to Herman, one uses textual cues and the related inferences that they make possible within a narrative to create "storyworlds." Through the use of local and global elements, one places a narrative within a certain framework, which leads to its comprehension.

What this might suggest is that through the use of a narrative in TPRS, students are required to place these stories in a specific framework, which then helps them to organize and comprehend not only their individual experiences but to comprehend the information in the TL. However, the concept of "story logic" has not been fully realized within narrative theory and needs to be examined more closely. Herman's forthcoming study on this area will hopefully explore these ideas in more depth. Additionally, because narrative theory generally deals with the written narrative, and not the spoken, additional research into the role of oral narration is needed to determine its benefits within the framework of TPRS.

Another area that may provide some insight into the Storytelling Phase of TPRS is the *Nacherzählung* (story retelling) within the context of German FL Instruction. Leech (1993) describes the use of the *Nacherzählung* in his German classes. Although he is primarily concerned with the written functions of retelling, he begins by stating:

> It has become common in discussions of literary theory to extend the idea of narrative to apply not just to written texts, but to any coherent system of signs and to the act of interpreting these signs. An author constructs a narrative from the text of the fictional events in a manner that makes these events meaningful. Readers, in turn, are also said to construct derivative texts through the act of reading. These personal narratives reflect those elements perceived as significant when encountered in the original artefact. Individual readers utilize these elements and their own experience to assimilate the literary text. (1993: 162)

He continues by suggesting how the *Nacherzählung* may help students move from one form of discourse (conversation) to another (narration). By retelling (in this case, rewriting) the story in a different tense (moving from the present to the preterite) and providing a personal reaction to the story, Leech maintains that students are reinforcing

their grammatical competence, mastering constructions of language typical in a meaningful context, and developing an individual perspective on the story and a personal response.

Although this concept of the *Nacherzählung* concerns its written aspect, it can be assumed that the Storytelling Phase of TPRS is merely the oral equivalent of the *Nacherzählung* (albeit without the theoretical components regarding literature that Leech discusses), and thus provides many of the same benefits. By having to retell stories, changing perspective and tense, students are forced to find and apply meaning within the "text" that they are "reading." Following Leech's ideas, this should also reinforce students' grammatical competence. Through the use of the PQA, students must form personal responses, even if these responses start on a very basic level. Once again, it becomes important to point out that most of the literature on stories and their retelling deals with its written aspect. To further understand this vital component of TPRS, additional research into oral storytelling, especially within the framework of a classroom, is needed.

Repeatable Behavior

An essential aspect of TPRS is its reliance on the repetition of task and behavior within a classroom. When imitating the teacher's commands in the TPR Phase, students repeat actions connected with linguistic forms to create associations between the two (as discussed in the TPR section above). Furthermore, students repeat the task of retelling a story during the Storytelling Phase, oftentimes with a slightly altered focus, as is the case when changing perspective and tense. As Ray and Seely state, "[l]anguages are learned

by repetitive, varied comprehensible input. It is at the PMS stage that our students get this input" (2002: 43).

Both TPR and story retelling are examples of repetition, but there is a slight difference in their classification. Lynch and Maclean (2000) stress the difference between duplication and retrial. During the TPR Phase, the focus is the *duplication* of an action, where it is simply repeated. As discussed earlier, there is some theoretical support for this type of repeatable behavior, including the benefits of using hand gestures to connect actions with linguistic forms and the necessity of using explicit learning with vocabulary, both present in the TPR Phase. In the Storyelling Phase, the focus is more on *retrial*, where the goal of the task is the same regardless of its individual components, but there are certain variations among these components (content, emphasis, etc.).

Lynch and Maclean (2000) performed an experiment to determine whether this sort of task repetition (retrial) has any effect on learners' interlanguage. The study's 14 participants were non-native speakers of English. The task involved a portion of the participants (*the hosts*) answering questions posed by the other participants (*the visitors*) about posters they had created summarizing medical journals. The participants repeated the tasks six times, with intervals of three minutes separating the cycles. With each "visitor," the "host" had to respond to different types of questions. Thus, although the goal was the same each time the "host" answered questions about the poster, the content and emphasis varied depending on the "visitor's" interests and/or questions. Additionally, participants completed individual questionnaires, where they self-reported on their performance. For the purposes of the study, the two participants with the lowest and highest TOEFL scores were analyzed.

What Lynch and Maclean discovered was an increase in the ability to recycle communicative content as the participants repeated their tasks. The participant with the lowest TOEFL score reported that she did not plan to make or make changes in her speech, while the participant with the highest score reported that she had made planned and unplanned changes. Both showed evidence of increased proficiency over the course of the six repetitions, albeit in different areas. This improvement may be because they were able to move from finding the correct expressions when answering the questions to being able to monitor the formulation and use of these expressions with each repetition. This seems to mirror a study of identical task repetition by Bygate (1996). What is also interesting is that both participants improved their speaking abilities, despite individual perceptions of their strategies when interacting with the "visitors."

This suggests that, by repeating a task, learners are able to recycle vocabulary and phrases to improve their speaking abilities as they plan how they will approach each repetition. In the context of TPRS, a student's repeated retelling of a story may allow that student to improve their proficiency over several repetitions and changes of perspective and tense. More specifically related to TPRS, Foster (1996) reported on three 10-minute tasks, one of which involved reconstructing a story from pictures. Out of the 32 participants, those who were given time to plan out how they would approach the task showed increased accuracy, more complex language, and less frequent and shorter pauses while speaking. It is unclear whether this effect would be retained over the course of several repetitions, but Lynch and Maclean's study seems to suggest that this might be the case. A study similar to theirs, focusing specifically on story retelling, is required to determine the effectiveness of TPRS's Storytelling Phase.

Chapter 3

EVALUATION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

Having discussed TPRS, its claims, and what it appears to be accomplishing in

the previous chapters, it is important to place an evaluation of these components within a

specific framework. The Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century

were first published in 1996 to "establish a new context that defines the central role of

foreign language in the learning career of every student" (National Standards in Foreign

Language Education Project, 1999: 15). By bringing FL educators together to achieve a

set of common beliefs, the Standards spell out specific goals for FLT in the United States.

Central to this philosophy is the following:

> Language and communication are at the heart of the human
> experience. The United States must educate students who
> are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate
> successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad.
> This imperative envisions a future in which ALL students
> will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at
> least one other language, modern or classical. (National
> Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999: 7)

Thus, TPRS's claim that more students have success with it than with traditional methods

of language teaching seems especially relevant in light of this statement. Additionally,

the Standards list the following as essential elements of a foreign language education:

Communication (communicate in languages other than English), Cultures (gain

knowledge and understanding of other cultures), Connections (connect with other

disciplines and acquire information), Comparisons (develop insight into the nature of

language and culture), and Communities (participate in multilingual communities at

home and around the world) (1999: 9). It is important to discuss the potential advantages

and disadvantages of TPRS within the framework of these Standards and their overall philosophy.

Advantages

<u>FLT for all Learners</u>

As stated earlier, TPRS claims that students using it feel included and validated. High school teachers (see Davidheiser, 2002, Williams, 2002) are reporting increased enrollments in foreign language classes using TPRS. This seems to suggest that the students in these classes may indeed be feeling more validated, and that because they may be having more success (another claim of TPRS), TPRS is able to include all types of learners in FLT. This follows the sentiment set forth in the Standards' philosophy, which asserts that "all students can be successful language and culture learners, and they must have access to language and culture study that is integrated into the entire school experience, [. . .] learn in a variety of ways and settings, and acquire proficiency at varied rates" (1999: 7). TPRS attempts to bring language instruction to all learners, incorporating visual, aural, and oral techniques into the Storytelling process. Storytelling becomes a medium by which multiple learner types are able to express themselves in a variety of ways. These include allowing the students to retell the stories in various settings (to friends and family at home, with a partner, before the class), writing the stories during assessments, and by allowing gestures, a vital component of communication (as discussed earlier) to aid in their oral production. This also seems to comply with the Standard of Communication, which is discussed in more detail in the

following section. One component of this philosophy that may be lacking in TPRS is the dissemination of culture, discussed in greater depth under TPRS's disadvantages. Nevertheless, the assertion that TPRS includes and validates students appears to have legitimacy. Although additional data will be necessary to determine if TPRS does indeed reach all students, the results of the New York State Proficiency Test, though anecdotal, do provide a promising impetus for more coordinated studies.

TL is used within Classroom and Other Settings

As mentioned above, students of TPRS use the TL in several settings, including the classroom and at home. The Communication Standard states that students:

> [. . .] engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions. Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics. Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics. (1999: 9)

Through the teacher's use of various stories, students are able to receive input on a variety of topics. Through the retelling of stories, students present information on a variety of topics. The exchange of information and opinion in TPRS may only really occur during the PQA, where students provide information to the teacher, or on written assessments, where they answer questions concerning the stories' content. This area of TPRS, though present, may need to be intensified to allow for more conversation between students.

The Communities Standard also asserts that "[s]tudents use the language both within and beyond the school setting" (1999: 9). TPRS achieves this goal, at least in a local sense. Students are constantly using the TL within a TPRS classroom, and because TPRS recommends that students retell the stories to families and friends, students gain

comfort using a foreign language outside of the classroom. As TPRS begins to be used at more advanced levels, such as at the university level, it may be required to establish more concrete connections between the various levels of instruction within and outside of the university setting, and perhaps to use native speaker resources to create more effective language communities.

Learner-Centered Classroom

The five Standards do not mention classroom management, but one final advantage that TPRS offers is a learner-centered classroom. TPRS requires a lot of work on the teacher's part and a TPRS classroom depends a lot on the teacher's personality; thus, when a teacher is telling a PMS or mini-story, the class is very focused on the teacher. However, there are several opportunities for the learners to speak, making much of the class learner-centered. When students retell stories to each other or in front of the class, the focus is placed entirely on their interaction, communication, and/or speaking abilities. The PQAs provide additional opportunities to focus attention on the students, as story content and new vocabulary are personalized towards them.

Disadvantages

Lack of Authentic Cultural Instruction

Three of the National Standards point towards students successfully gaining an understanding of the TL culture. The Cultures Standard states that students "[. . .] demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives

of the culture studied. Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied" (1999: 9). Additionally, the Comparisons Standard asserts that "[s]tudents demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own" (1999: 9). Finally, the Connections Standard states the following: "Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures" (1999: 9).

This is an area where TPRS seems to be severely lacking. Cultural information is presented in a superficial manner, because the pictures and stories used in the Storytelling Phase have been created by language teachers. They are author-generated and thus are not authentic texts. Davidheiser (2002) and Williams (2002) mention problems incorporating outside texts into TPRS curriculum. When compounded, these realities of TPRS effectively bar students from receiving authentic cultural instruction. It is certainly foreseeable that teachers would be able to incorporate cultural information into their stories, but these are not authentic texts. If students are to understand the relationships between the practices, products, and perspectives of a culture, and then compare them to their own, they should receive authentic examples of that culture, learning the proper reading strategies for authentic texts. Users of TPRS may need to find a way to incorporate authentic texts into their curricula. Another suggestion might be to use authentic, level-appropriate stories from the target culture. As the development of TPRS materials continues, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on the cultural component.

Lack of Reading Material

As mentioned in the discussion of CI, students in a TPRS classroom may not be receiving enough comprehensible reading material. As discussed earlier, research has shown that large amounts of reading material are necessary for vocabulary acquisition (see Schmitt, 2000). Additionally, the Communication Standard asserts that students receive written *and* spoken language on a variety of topics (1999: 9). If students are to acquire the TL, and if classrooms are to follow the intentions set forth in the Standards, proponents of TPRS should find a solution to this imbalance.

There should be a concerted effort to find more level-appropriate reading material for TPRS students, or to train TPRS teachers to tailor any authentic reading material to the level of the class being instructed. Because reading texts can be used to disseminate cultural information, a solution to this problem should be undertaken in conjunction with TPRS's lack of authentic cultural instruction.

Exhaustion Factor

Though not specifically mentioned in the National Standards, there is an exhaustion factor related to using TPRS. TPRS requires a lot of involvement and preparation from the teacher, and can oftentimes lead to exhaustion on the teacher's part. Additionally, students themselves may find it difficult to participate in a TPRS classroom day after day. This lack of energy is something that may need to be addressed in light of the Standards. Under the Implications of Standards heading, the following is suggested:

> Change will continue to be incremental, but it will accelerate if we succeed in addressing the central issue that sets the stage for the future: the preparation of new teachers of all language at all levels within our schools.

Professional development for practicing teachers will also be crucial, and the message of standards must permeate those learning experiences as well. (1999: 15)

If this is to be accomplished, teachers using TPRS must be trained in order to handle the sheer amount of work and energy required. Williams (2002) suggests that teachers use a stool whenever possible to regain some energy during classes, as well as using pre-written PMSs. Finally, he suggests that it may be necessary to take a break from TPRS occasionally. Ray and Seely (2002) point out that in TPRS, there are fewer tests and less homework, which might help compensate for the extra energy required of teachers in this setting. They also admit, though, that teachers have to provide a large amount of energy to keep students interested. Proper teacher training is vital for any method of teaching, but because TPRS requires so much involvement on the teacher's part, those using it should be adequately trained to deal with their lack of energy, as well as that of the students.

Relevancy to National Standards

Examining TPRS in the framework of the National Standards and its philosophy, it appears to have some of the same goals as the Standards. The two also seem to share the same philosophy: foreign language education for all students. The Standards of Communication and Communities are represented most strongly in TPRS, though there is definite room for improvement in these areas as well. Where TPRS seems to be lacking is in the Standards of Cultures, Connections, and Comparisons, all three of which deal with culture. Ray and Seely state the following:

The "five C's" which constitute the national standards [. . .]
of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign

Languages (ACTFL) and ten other national language teachers' associations are communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities. We believe that communication is the important one, that nearly all of class time should in some way be devoted to this one. This is what language classes are for. It is fine to include the other four within communication, but it is counterproductive to work on any of them in class time without at the same time mainly focusing on the development of communicative proficiency. (2002: ix)

It is true that the other Standards should be incorporated into communication within the classroom. However, if communication becomes the only goal within the classroom, it is possible for cultural instruction to become completely marginalized, and in time forgotten.

Any further developments within TPRS should concentrate on incorporating more authentic cultural information into the materials and the classrooms. As stated in the Standards: "[t]he exquisite connections between the culture that is lived and the language that is spoken can only be realized by those who possess a knowledge of both" (1999: 47). If TPRS intends on achieving this goal, a new attitude towards the TL's culture must be integrated into its future curriculum.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

TPRS is becoming a well-known method in the field of FLT (especially in high schools) despite the lack of secondary literature that exists on it. Its proponents claim incredible success with it, and speak of rising foreign language enrollments, although there is little research to support these claims. Yet TPRS remains popular, seemingly because of its word-of-mouth spread through workshops and the Internet.

After examining TPRS in more detail, it is clear that it is supported by some theoretical legitimacy, although several of its theoretical components are unexplored in the field of SLA and FLT. It is also clear that it is in some ways extremely advantageous for students of a foreign language, but that there are deficiencies and disadvantages that need to be addressed as well.

In the framework of the National Standards, TPRS seems to have some of the same goals, at least in terms of their core philosophies. There are, however, areas of TPRS, specifically its handling of cultural instruction, which need to be improved upon in great detail if TPRS is to achieve the goals set forth by the Standards. To this end, proponents of TPRS need to move their impressive organization and resultant discussions from the Internet to the field of academia.

A series of studies is needed to examine TPRS's theoretical components, its claims of success, and its effectiveness in more detail. The preceding research is in no way complete, but will hopefully serve two purposes. First of all, it should at least partially fill the void in research and secondary literature regarding TPRS. Secondly, it should spur others on to investigate the individual areas that have been discussed.

Further research of a both practical and theoretical nature is required to validate a method

that appears to hold promise for the future of FLT in the United States.

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